

CAMPFIRE

SAFETY

Anyone who has felt the warmth of a fire and enjoyed its friendly light knows that fire is not always a devastating blaze. Fire, along with air, water and earth, was considered a basic element by our ancestors. Long ago they learned to use and control fire. It was, perhaps, their first tool.

Most people are careful with fire. They build their fires in the right places and at the right time. They keep them the proper size and put them out before leaving them.

But forest fires raging out of control - wildfires - are an awesome and terrifying sight. They have aroused fear from earliest times. The damage they do is appalling, and this wasteful burning goes on year after year. The best way to keep forest fire damage low is to keep forest fires from getting started.

A few tips are provided here to help you enjoy your campfire safely outdoors. For more information, contact your local fire protection agency.

Remember, Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires.



Building it...

Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass, and leaves. Pile any extra wood away from the fire.

Keep plenty of water handy and have a shovel for throwing dirt on the fire if it gets out of control.

Start with dry twigs and small sticks. Add larger sticks as the fire builds up.

Put the largest pieces of wood on last, pointing them toward the center of the fire, and gradually push them into the flames.

Keep the campfire small. A good bed of coals or a small fire surrounded by rocks gives plenty of heat. Scrape away litter, duff, and any burnable material within a 10-foot diameter circle. This will keep a small campfire from spreading.

Be sure your match is out. Hold it until it is cold. Break it so that you can feel the charred portion before discarding it. Make sure it is cold out. Conserve matches - carry a candle as a fire starter.

Enjoying it...

Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.

Putting it out...

Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet. Move rocks - there may be burning embers underneath.

Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again. Be sure all burned material has been extinguished and cooled. If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix enough soil or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cooled.

Feel all materials with your bare hand. Make sure that no roots are burning. Do not bury your coals - they can smolder and break out.

Since people cause most wildfires, we all have a part in preventing them. We can be more careful ourselves. And whoever we are and wherever we are, we can influence others to use more care with fires.



Remember, a little extra care takes only a few minutes of your time. And it could prevent a wildfire.